In the Claims

1-10. (cancelled)

11. (new) A filter element, comprising:

a filter cylinder having a filter mat web arranged in a series of folds adjacent to one another at least in individual areas thereof, each of said folds having two radial members extending radially inwardly and connected by a crown on radial outward fold ends, said filter mat web having two web ends extending a height of said filter mat web and connected to one another at a junction point forming said filter mat web into an annular element, two of said folds being adjacent to said junction point and on opposite sides thereof;

a fluid permeable support tube surrounding said filter cylinder; and

a retaining device with retaining elements overlapping said two of said folds on outer surfaces of said radial members thereof remote from said junction point;

whereby, when fluid to be filtered flows through said filter element from an interior thereof to an exterior thereof, said retaining device resists bulging of said two of said folds and separation of said web ends of said filter mat web.

12. (new) A filter element according to claim 11 wherein

said ends of said filter mat web are joined along end edges facing interiorly of said annular element; and

said crowns of two of said folds face said support tube.

13. (new) A filter element according to claim 12 wherein

said filter mat web comprises a flexible mat of metal-free, plastic-supported filter mats.

14. (new) A filter element according to claim 13 wherein

said junction point comprises a fusion seam.

15. (new) A filter element according to claim 14 wherein

said filter mat web has dimensions allowing reversal of said annular element, whereby said fusion seam can be formed on an exterior of said annular element and then be reversed to be located in an interior of said annular element.

16. (new) A filter element according to claim 11 wherein

said retaining elements comprise retaining projections extending radially inwardly from an inner surface of said support tube.

17. (new) A filter element according to claim 16 wherein

said support tube comprises a transfer-molded plastic tube with said retaining projections formed integrally thereon.

18. (new) A filter element according to claim 16 wherein

one of said projections comprises a series of members spaced by interstices and arranged along a length of said support tube.

19.   (new) A filter element according to claim 11 wherein

said retaining device comprises a U-shaped clamping element with legs thereof forming

said retaining elements and with a bight portion thereof connecting said legs and being adjacent

an inner surface of said support tube.

20.   (new) A filter element according to claim 15 wherein

said dimensions are determined by the following relationships

$$L_M = 2^* F_{Anz} * \left(F_H - 2^* M + \frac{\pi^* M}{2} \right)$$

$$D_{a_{max}} = D_i + 2^* L_{max}$$

$$L_{max} = \frac{D_{a_{max}} - D_i}{2}$$

$$D_{f2} = \frac{F_{Anz} * F_D}{\pi}$$

$$L_{M_{max}} = D_{a_{max}} * \pi$$

$$D_{a_{max}} = \frac{L_{M_{max}}}{\pi}$$

$$D_{a_{max}} = D_i + 2 * L_{max}$$

$$L_{max} = \frac{D_{a_{max}} - D_i}{2}$$

$$L_{max} = \frac{\frac{L_{M\,max}}{\pi} - D_i}{2}$$

$$L_{max} = \frac{L_{M\,max} - F_{Anz} * F_D}{2 * \pi}$$

$$L_{max} = \frac{F_{Anz} * \left(F_H - 2 * M + \frac{\pi * M}{2} - \frac{F_D}{2} \right)}{\pi}$$

where

F_{ANZ} = number of folds in said filter mat web

F_H = height of each fold

F_D = thickness of each fold

M = strength of material of structure of said filter mat web

L_M = extended length of said filter mat web

L_{Mmax} = maximum extended length of said filter mat web

D_{amax} = maximum external diameter of a filter disk formed from said annular element

D_i = internal diameter of said filter disk formed from said annular element

L_{max} = maximum length of said filter cylinder .